

Trustworthiness Education in Ancient Chinese Beliefs

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Abstract: In ancient China, education was people-oriented, and relatively speaking, it did not rely on mysticism. However, ancient Chinese education also advocated “Shen Dao She Jiao (to educate by the method of mysticism)”, and trustworthiness education is one of the typical representatives.

1. Introduction

Mysticism has a certain role in the ancient moral education. Compared with other forms of civilization, ancient Chinese religious beliefs, especially mysticism, are not developed. Ancient Chinese education is people-oriented and does not rely heavily on mysticism. However, ancient Chinese education also borrowed mysticism or “God”-related ideas, and trustworthiness education is one of the typical representatives, which includes sincerity and honesty.

Sincerity was first associated with piety and belief in Gods. In “The Book of Historical Documents”, there are the concepts of sincere and honesty. Among them, Sincere mainly refers to devout to Gods: “The spirits (Gods-author's note) do not always accept the sacrifices that are offered to them; they accept only the sacrifices of the sincere.”^[1] Later, sincerity gradually faded away from mystery and became a daily moral principle, but the requirement for sincerity is still directly or indirectly related to “mysticism”.

The traditional ideological systems advocating “Shen Dao She Jiao (to educate by the method of mysticism)” mainly include the following types: “BOOK OF CHANGES”, Mohist, Dong Zhongshu thought, Taoism and Buddhism. Among them, “BOOK OF CHANGES” and Mohism are non-religious belief systems, and Taoism and Buddhism are religious belief systems. Whether Dong Zhongshu’s thought belongs to religion is a controversial issue. This article classifies them as “non-religious beliefs system”.

2. Sincerity and Honesty Education in Non-Religious Belief System

The idea of “Shen Dao She Jiao(to educate by the method of mysticism)” originated from “BOOK OF CHANGES”: “When we contemplate the spirit-like way of Heaven, we see how the four seasons proceed without error. The sages, in accordance with (this) spirit-like way, laid down their instructions, and all under heaven yield submission to them.”^{[2](p95)} “BOOK OF CHANGES” reveals the unity of the world, and will metaphysically “dao “As the metaphysical abstraction of “all things”, it links the law of world change with human ethics: “...which is antecedent to the material form exists, we say, as an ideal method, and that which is subsequent to the material form exists, we say, as a definite things.”^{[3](p314-315)} Hence, to speak of the emblematic figures:-(The sage) was able

to survey all the complex phenomena under the sky. He then considered in his mind how they could be figured, and (by the means of the diagrams) represented their material forms and character. Hence those (diagrams) are denominated Semblances. ^{[4](p315)} This kind of education points out the importance of “integrity”, of course, has the tendency of effect theory, but it focuses on the importance of honesty. It is worth noting that although there are concepts such as spirits and Gods in “BOOK OF CHANGES”, which may cause people to associate mysticism, it is also clear indeed, it points out the fact that people must follow objective laws, and finds a metaphysical basis for moral standards such as human integrity. Among the sixty-four hexagrams, there is a hexagram that symbolizes honesty, namely “Zhong-Fu”. The hexagram is the lower part and the upper part of the sun-dae. The original meaning of “Fu” is to incubate, and the date when the eggs are hatched out of the shell is very accurate and has the meaning of honesty. “BOOK OF CHANGES” can be used for divination and prediction. It is precisely because people believe that human affairs are inherent in nature. Through observing and capturing images, people can get the enlightenment of the law of all things, and then connect with the moral and social functions of people, thereby obtaining the principles of being human. The educational function of “BOOK OF CHANGES” benefits to a certain extent from people's awe of nature and their conviction in the relationship between people and the world. The so-called “sincere is spirit”. People believe that yin and yang are the essence of everything and the code of contact and the world, so they sincerely ask hexagrams and put into practice the moral concepts advocated in “BOOK OF CHANGES”.

Among the hundreds of schools in the pre-Qin Dynasty, the Mohist was the most prominent in practicing integrity. They believe that “A man who breaks his word will not end well in his deeds.” ^{[5](p10)} According to records, the Mohists kept their promises, consistent with their words and deeds. This is inseparable from their beliefs. The Mohist believes that disbelief in ghosts and gods is the root cause of moral decline, which will lead to chaos in the world: “Doubt the existence of ghosts and gods, and it is not clear that ghosts and gods can reward the good and punish violence” ^{[6](p221)}. Therefore, if you want to “rejuvenate the world and eliminate its harm”, you need to distinguish the existence of ghosts and gods.

Dong Zhongshu's attitude towards ghosts and gods is “fear them and dare not deceive them”^[7], and also incorporates mysticism into sincere and honest education. Dong Zhongshu did not directly discuss honest education, but Dong Zhongshu is a Confucian thinker, and Confucianism values education, and its ideological system for the purpose of education, and has a practical educational function.

3. Sincerity and Honest Education in Religious Education System

The traditional Chinese elite has a relatively high degree of acceptance of Confucianism and Taoism. But religious beliefs with mysticism have a greater impact on the general public. Religious beliefs had a profound influence on the moral values and daily behaviours of the lower classes in ancient society. Among them, Buddhism and Taoism have the greatest influence.

The highest state of Buddhism is to become a Buddha (also known as Tathagata), and honesty and non-deception is one of the fundamental characteristics of Buddha: “The Tathagata is a true speaker, an honest speaker, a sincerity speaker, a nonsense, and a non-fake speaker. “Because Buddhism takes Buddhahood as the goal of practice, honesty is also the proper meaning of Buddhist practice.

Buddhism pursues liberation, and believes that desire is the source of troubles, and the state of liberation should be achieved through precepts and practice. Compared with Confucianism and Taoism, Buddhism emphasizes faith more. Its “sincerity” and “faith” are connected with the devotion of faith and the sincerity of practice. Master Yinguang said: “Ritual, recitation, and all

kinds of practice should be based on honesty and respect. Honesty is the ultimate. Even if the merits mentioned in the scriptures cannot be achieved in ordinary places, the gains are hard to think about and difficult to discuss. If there is no sincere respect, it is the same as singing. Its pains, joys, sorrows and joys are all fake makeup, which cannot help but come out. Even if there is merit, it is nothing but the infatuation of man and nature. And this infatuation, you must rely on it to create Negative karma. Why is there a time for its future suffering. It should be popularized in this sense to tell the peers that if you need to cultivate and practice and really do, it will benefit.” The Pure Land Buddhism believes that the various methods of Buddhist practice, including worship, reading the scriptures, keeping the precepts, and reciting the Buddha, all are based on sincere respect. Sincerely respected to the extreme, even though he could not fully obtain the great merits mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures in the realm of ordinary people, his cultivation gains were incredible. On the contrary, if you are not sincere and respectful, all practice is equivalent to singing, not from the heart, but just superficial writing and deception. Even if this practice has a good reward, it is a common blessing for ordinary people. Enjoying this blessing can only make people indulge in it. On the contrary, it is easy to cause evil karma because of the superior conditions, and it will be difficult to extricate themselves in the future. Therefore, in practice, you must practice, really do, and respect, this kind of benefit is the most extensive.

There are five basic precepts in Buddhist precepts-killing precepts, stealing precepts, precepts of adultery, precepts of lying, precepts of drinking, among which “precepts of lying precepts” means that language is forbidden to do evil, and lying precepts include lying and fraud. Ancient Chinese monks often used the “five precepts” of Buddhism to match the “five permanences” of Confucianism-benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom, and faith. They believed that the precepts of “liar talk” corresponded to “faith”, which is the embodiment of honesty and non-deception. For example, Qi Song, a well-known Buddhist thinker in the Song Dynasty, believed that “husbands don’t kill, but benevolent; don’t steal, righteous; don’t wickedly or ritually; don’t drink alcohol and be wise; In fact, the five precepts can all embody the principle of integrity, and observing the precepts is helpful to the cultivation of integrity. On the contrary, if the person who is ordained has committed a sin, he must repent and repent. The main way of repentance is to speak out his faults in public in order to eliminate sin and eliminate karma. It can be seen that the prerequisite for reform is sincerity, and honesty is the foundation of Buddhist practice. Buddhism's pious belief, sincere practice and strict precepts are the solid foundation of the believer's personal integrity.

The purpose of Taoist practice is to return to reality. Sima Chengzhen, a famous Taoist thinker, believes that the superiority of the ancient times over the later generations lies in the innocence of the former and the hypocrisy of the latter. He believes that lack of desire, contemplation, and inaction are the fundamental ways to maintain “truth” and see “truth”: “Faith is the foundation of the Tao; respect is the way of morality.” “Receive simple things in the heart, daily detriment and deeds, calm and leisurely, only then can we see the truth.”

4. Sincerity and Honesty Education Related to “God” in Non-Mysticism Theories

Not all thoughts related to “God” in ancient China were mysticism. “Book of Rites” attaches great importance to honesty education and advocates that the highest honesty does not need to sign a contract. This is one of the manifestations of determination to learn.^[8] “Book of Rites” believes that the highest sincerity is like “God”, which can predict future events. But this is not mysticism. It is the belief that morality such as good and evil has objective effects. Therefore, moral behavior will inevitably bring corresponding consequences. Therefore, the consequences of moral behaviour can be predicted based on moral attributes-goodness corresponds to happiness, and evil corresponds to

disaster. “BOOK OF CHANGES” that values integrity believes that the “God” is not exist in any place, because the “God” is not restricted in any form. In the “BOOK OF CHANGES”, the “God” means the magical function of Yin and Yang. However, considering the supremacy of the “BOOK OF CHANGES” in ancient Chinese education, the “God” recorded in it may be misunderstood as mysticism.

5. Discussion

In summary, ancient China attached great importance to the character of sincerity and honesty, trustworthiness education incorporated elements of mysticism and thoughts related to “God”, and became an important ideological content in various belief systems in ancient China.

References

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